Lesson Three: The Past Tense Verb
[اَلْفِعْل اَلْمَاضِي]

The *past tense verb* (**اَلْفِعْل اَلْمَاضِي**) describes actions or events that have already occurred.

PRINCIPLE ONE

The pattern **فَعَلَ** (*he did*) is used as a model for the *past tense verb*. In this pattern each of the base letters is voweled with a *fathah*.[7]

PRINCIPLE TWO

Verbs in the English language are conjugated to reflect the subject[8] of the verb. For example, "he did" and "we did." Here, the pronouns "he" and "we" indicate the subject. Arabic verbs are conjugated in a similar manner. In particular, the Arabic verb is conjugated to reflect three aspects of its subject:

1) person[9] (first, second, third)
2) gender[10] (masculine, feminine)
3) plurality[11] (singular, dual, plural)

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[7] The pattern **فَعَلَ** is one of several patterns used for the *past tense verb*. Others are presented in *Lesson Sixteen*.

[8] The subject denotes the *doer* of the action described by a verb.

[9] The first person is used to refer to the *speaker*. For example, "I did" or "we did." The second person is used to refer to the individual *spoken to*. For example, "you did." The third person is used to refer to the individual *spoken of*. For example, "he did" or "they did."

[10] The masculine is used to refer to *male beings* or *masculine objects*. For example, "he did" or "it did." The feminine is used to refer to *female beings* or *feminine objects*. For example, "she did" or "it did."

[11] The singular is used to refer to *an individual*. For example, "he did." The dual is used to refer to *two individuals*. For example, "both of them did." The plural is used to refer to *a group*. For example, "they did."

PRINCIPLE THREE

While English verbs are conjugated by placing a noun or pronoun before the verb, Arabic verbs are conjugated by adding designated letters to the end of the verb. Carefully study the *past tense verb* conjugations (*table 3.1*), noting the changes in person, gender, and plurality.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

English verbs may express either the active or the passive voice. The active voice is used when the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed by the verb. For example, "Zaid wrote a book." Here, the verb "wrote" is in the active voice because Zaid is indicated as the writer. The passive voice, on the other hand, is used when the subject of the verb is not indicated. For example, "A book was written." Here, the verb "was written" is in the passive voice because, although a book was written, the writer is not indicated.

Arabic verbs also express either the active or the passive voice. Earlier, *principle one* illustrated **فَعَلَ** as a model for the active voice of the *past tense verb*. The pattern for the passive voice of the *past tense verb* is formed from the active voice by (1) changing the voweling of the first letter to a *dammah* and (2) changing the voweling of the second to last letter to a *kasrah*. Thus **فَعَلَ** (*he did*) becomes **فُعِلَ** (*it was done*).

PRINCIPLE FIVE

Principle two established that verbs in the active voice are conjugated to reflect the *subject* of the verb. When conjugating verbs in the passive voice, each conjugation reflects the person, gender, and plurality of the *object*,[12] and not the *subject*, of the verb. For example, consider the statement **ضُرِبَ** (he was hit). Here, the object of the verb is stated (i.e., he), but the subject is not indicated. Therefore, the verb is conjugated to

[12] The object denotes the noun that *receives* the action of a verb.

reflect the object of the verb. As illustrated in *table 3.2*, active and passive voice conjugations use the same endings.

PRINCIPLE SIX

Placing the word " **مَا** " before both the active and passive voice negates the *past tense verb* (*table 3.2*). For example, **فَعَلَ** (*he did*) becomes **مَا فَعَلَ** (*he did not do*), and **فُعِلَ** (*it was done*) becomes **مَا فُعِلَ** (*it was not done*).

ESSENTIAL NOTE

The conjugations of the *past tense verb* must be memorized (*table 3.2*) before moving to the next lesson.

TABLE 3.1

CONJUGATING THE *PAST TENSE VERB*

PERSON	GENDER	PLURALITY	BASE		SUFFIX		ACTIVE VOICE
3rd	Masculine	Singular	فعل			⇨	فَعَلَ He/It (S/M) did
3rd	Masculine	Dual	فعل	+	ا	⇨	فَعَلاَ They (D/M) did
3rd	Masculine	Plural	فعل	+	وْا	⇨	فَعَلُوْا [13] They (P/M) did
3rd	Feminine	Singular	فعل	+	تْ	⇨	فَعَلَتْ She/It (S/F) did
3rd	Feminine	Dual	فعل	+	تَا	⇨	فَعَلَتَا They (D/F) did
3rd	Feminine	Plural	فعل	+	نَ	⇨	فَعَلْنَ They (P/F) did
2nd	Masculine	Singular	فعل	+	تَ	⇨	فَعَلْتَ You (S/M) did
2nd	Masculine	Dual	فعل	+	تُمَا	⇨	فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/M) did
2nd	Masculine	Plural	فعل	+	تُمْ	⇨	فَعَلْتُمْ You (P/M) did
2nd	Feminine	Singular	فعل	+	تِ	⇨	فَعَلْتِ You (S/F) did
2nd	Feminine	Dual	فعل	+	تُمَا	⇨	فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/F) did
2nd	Feminine	Plural	فعل	+	تُنَّ	⇨	فَعَلْتُنَّ You (P/F) did
1st	Masculine and Feminine	Singular	فعل	+	تُ	⇨	فَعَلْتُ I did
1st	Masculine and Feminine	Plural	فعل	+	نَا	⇨	فَعَلْنَا We did

M=Masculine F=Feminine S=Singular D=Dual P=Plural

[13] The ʿ*alif* (ا) at the end of this conjugation is not pronounced.

TABLE 3.2

THE *PAST TENSE VERB*

PASSIVE VOICE NEGATION	ACTIVE VOICE NEGATION	PASSIVE VOICE	ACTIVE VOICE
مَا فُعِلَ He/It (S/M) was not done	مَا فَعَلَ He/It (S/M) did not do	فُعِلَ He/It (S/M) was done	فَعَلَ He/It (S/M) did
مَا فُعِلاَ They (D/M) were not done	مَا فَعَلاَ They (D/M) did not do	فُعِلاَ They (D/M) were done	فَعَلاَ They (D/M) did
مَا فُعِلُوْا They (P/M) were not done	مَا فَعَلُوْا They (P/M) did not do	فُعِلُوْا They (P/M) were done[14]	فَعَلُوْا They (P/M) did
مَا فُعِلَتْ She/It (S/F) was not done	مَا فَعَلَتْ She/It (S/F) did not do	فُعِلَتْ She/It (S/F) was done	فَعَلَتْ She/It (S/F) did
مَا فُعِلَتَا They (D/F) were not done	مَا فَعَلَتَا They (D/F) did not do	فُعِلَتَا They (D/F) were done	فَعَلَتَا They (D/F) did
مَا فُعِلْنَ They (P/F) were not done	مَا فَعَلْنَ They (P/F) did not do	فُعِلْنَ They (P/F) were done	فَعَلْنَ They (P/F) did
مَا فُعِلْتَ You (S/M) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتَ You (S/M) did not do	فُعِلْتَ You (S/M) were done	فَعَلْتَ You (S/M) did
مَا فُعِلْتُمَا You (D/M) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/M) did not do	فُعِلْتُمَا You (D/M) were done	فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/M) did
مَا فُعِلْتُمْ You (P/M) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتُمْ You (P/M) did not do	فُعِلْتُمْ You (P/M) were done	فَعَلْتُمْ You (P/M) did
مَا فُعِلْتِ You (S/F) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتِ You (S/F) did not do	فُعِلْتِ You (S/F) were done	فَعَلْتِ You (S/F) did
مَا فُعِلْتُمَا You (D/F) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/F) did not do	فُعِلْتُمَا You (D/F) were done	فَعَلْتُمَا You (D/F) did
مَا فُعِلْتُنَّ You (P/F) were not done	مَا فَعَلْتُنَّ You (P/F) did not do	فُعِلْتُنَّ You (P/F) were done	فَعَلْتُنَّ You (P/F) did
مَا فُعِلْتُ I was not done	مَا فَعَلْتُ I did not do	فُعِلْتُ I was done	فَعَلْتُ I did
مَا فُعِلْنَا We were not done	مَا فَعَلْنَا We did not do	فُعِلْنَا We were done	فَعَلْنَا We did

M=Masculine F=Feminine S=Singular D=Dual P=Plural

[14] "They were done," implies several acts were performed. Recall that the *passive verb* is conjugated to reflect its object.